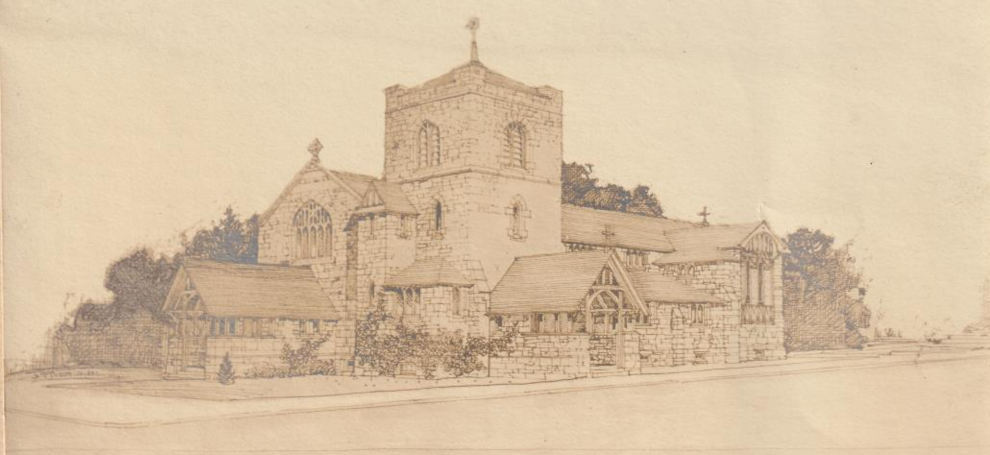
St. John's Church

Huntington, L. I.

1747-1906







SAINT·JOHN'S·CHURCH·HUNTINGTON·L·I·

H·M·CONGDON AND SON ARCHITECTS NY CITY

Sketch of St. John's Church

HUNTINGTON - - LONG ISLAND

NEARLY two hundred years ago St. John's was planted in the wilderness in the hope that it would make "the wilderness blossom as the rose." Long before the war clouds of the Revolution had darkened our fair land, while nearly all of Long Island was still a "forest primeval," inhabited mostly by dusky Indian tribes, the Church of England established a Mission on those lonely shores as a beacon light to guide her children to that blessed haven of peace, where we all hope to anchor our souls at last. Two hundred years have witnessed national progress unequaled in the world's history, and the handful of timid colonists has become the greatest people on the globe.

The location chosen was at that time as central as anywhere—there was no center, and the work was commenced amid hostile surroundings. The Church of England (as St. John's Church was at first called), was not welcomed among those who had fled from religious persecution in England, and for half a century it had a battle against unjust opposition. Its ministry was considered exclusive, and its members disloyal. But, in truth, while love to the Mother Church was strong, when the days came "which tried men's souls," love of country was stronger still. And at one time during the Revolution the little Church was willingly given up for hospital uses. However, the records of the parish during those early days were few and fragmentary, and, during the Revolution many were lost.

The Mission was at first under the care of the Rector of St. George's Church, Hempstead, the records of which state that on August 12, 1727, he united in marriage Benjamin Treadwell, of Hempstead, and Phebe Platt, of Huntington. In 1747 a Church was built, and our beautiful services were regularly held up to the time of the Revolution. Among those who ministered here, were the beloved and honored Samuel Seabury, of Hempstead, and afterward his more distinguished son, the first Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America.

It was a "day of small things" as regards salary. Mr. Seabury received ten pounds per annum. But from the brief record of his work we may well believe—

> "A man he was to all the country dear,
> And passing rich on full ten pounds a year."

It is a matter of no small gratification to the members of this parish to recall that the first Bishop of our Church in this country was once its minister. No less gratifying to remember that Rev. J. H. Hobart, afterwards Bishop, ministered in this parish occasionally, and many others, honored and beloved, though not so prominent. During the first half century the church could not support a Rector, one hundred dollars per year and a small house and glebe being the highest salary offered. After the Revolution all help from England ceased. However, the little congregation "held the fort," and waited for better days. To give a history of those long years of weakness and patient waiting would far exceed the limits of this brief sketch. The history of more recent years is too well known to need recital. Nor is it necessary to give statistics of parish work growth. Every citizen of Huntington knows that our Church has done a work here which will be blest forevermore.

But the time has now come in the Providence of God when the work must be enlarged to meet the growing needs of our increasing population. It seems to most of the members that the calamity of fire which destroyed the beautiful Church may be turned into a blessing for the community at large. They hear, in this Providence, the voice of God, saying: "Arise and depart hence, for this is not your home."

It is painful to many to leave the beautiful woodland site, where this historic Church has stood for many generations, and which has been consecrated by the work and worship of so many who have passed away. But those feelings must be sacrificed to meet the needs of Christ's work now.

The Church is far from the center of population in Huntington and the town is not growing in that direction. While fully as convenient for those who ride in their carriages as the proposed new site, yet the Church is for all, and should be placed where it can be easily reached by all. No one can question this. And surely the work ought to grow faster in the center of the village than so far removed to one side that few can walk the distance, and fewer still are willing to do so on stormy days and over muddy roads.

At all events, the effort should be made, and if the ardent hopes which animate this movement should not be realized, the fault will not rest against the workers, nor will it cause them any regrets that they gave up the old location, though endeared by associations and followed by generations of holy use, in the hope of doing a larger work for the glory of God and the good of mankind.

Bishop Brownell, of Connecticut, declared, in 1844, that "a new Church ought

to be built in the village of Huntington where it is needed, and where the Church would increase."

Through the munificent generosity of a parishioner a large and central location has been donated. Long may she live to see the work grow and prosper before she goes hence to be an angel, that is, puts off her present disguise. And it was, as all know, a dear hope in the heart of Miss Anna Paulding, who consecrated her life to noble work.

And if the right course is followed, if wisdom and energy are used, the work will, by the blessing of God, grow and increase for generations yet to come.

The good men do lives after them. Its influence radiates and expands beyond the farthest shores of time and goes forward into eternity. Good works possess a kind of immortality.

When you build a church, you are doing a work which will remain to bless mankind for ages after you are gone. Go on, then, with your work, "with one heart and one mind," and when your work on earth is done, go joyfully to join the noble workers who have gone before you to enter upon "the rest which remaineth for the people of God."

> "When sheltered there your conflict's past,
> And life's long battle won at last;
> No more you need the shield or sword.
> You dwell forever with the Lord;
> Beloved of God, forever blest,
> In His dear home how sweet your rest."

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